Lambda Letters Project

Lavender Library, Archives
and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA
32629

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Lobbying, It's Not Just for Lobbyists Anymore

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

When people think of civil rights movements they most often think of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his "I Have a Dream" speech. That's great. It was a noble, awe-inspiring speech and he was one of the truly great men of this nation.

But the hard reality is that his speech would have gotten nowhere if there hadn't been people unwilling to give up their seats on the bus or at the lunch counter. His and all American civil rights movements succeed when ordinary people are willing to do what, for the most part, are simple ordinary things. It's really not rocket science.

Most people like things simple, clear and easy. Unfortunately, life is rarely like that. It's never like that in politics or lobbying. This year is no exception. Lobbying is gritty and rarely very inspiring. On the other hand, much of what needs to be done is stuff that ordinary people like yourselves can do if you are willing to take the time.

Lobbying is full of surprises. Who would have thought that California's energy crisis would have an

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Donate a Mammogram for Free

If you have Internet access, you can donate a mammogram to a woman who can't afford to pay for one, and it won't cost you one cent.

Discovering breast cancer early is the best way to beat it. One of the best ways to find breast cancer early is with a mammogram. Yet according to the Breast Cancer Foundation more than 13 million women over 40 have never had a mammogram. Many of them can't afford it.

An organization called Greatergood.com has gathered 100 companies willing to donate funds to pay for free mammograms. All you have to do is go to their Breast Cancer Site and click on the words "Donate Free Mammograms." That's all there is to it!

After you do that you will be brought to a page with links to the site's sponsors. If you click on those links and look at the sponsors' ads or buy something from them, additional money for free mammograms will donated. But the first step is free to you and without obligation.

The address of the site is www.thebreastcancersite.com. Please visit it often.

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

January, 2001	1,889 letters & e-mails
In all of 2000	120,362 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

January, 2001	$3,108
In all of 2000	$25,216

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Mission Statement

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in American society.

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People of Color Issue

Support Tax Incentives For Health Insurance

by Marty Martinez

Please write to a member of the Assembly Revenue and Tax Committee in support of AB 39, introduced by Assembly Member Helen Thomson, D of Davis.

AB 39 would provide a tax credit to certain employers who pay for health insurance for their employees. The tax credit would reduce the state income tax they owe by 50% of the amount they spend on health insurance for their employees. There are certain conditions which the employer must meet to qualify for the tax credit. The employer must:

✓ Have 15 or fewer employees.

✓ Pay at least 75% of the insurance premium.

✓ Must make insurance available to all eligible individuals at least annually.

According to a recent report issued by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 6.8 million Californians were without health insurance in 1999, the most recent year for which data were available. Twenty two percent of Californians had no health insurance. That was worse than all but three other states. Most people get their health insurance through their place of employment. Even so, 85% of Californians without health insurance were employed. In addition, high percentages of the uninsured were among one or more of the following groups; non-citizens, Latino/as, people without a highschool diploma, the working poor.

Actually the number of insured Californians was higher in 1999 than in previous years. Apparently the tight labor market persuaded more employers to offer employer paid health insurance to attract workers. However, if the economy goes south, and unemployment goes up things may get worse again. Fewer employers may be willing to, or able to, pay for employee health insurance. This may be particularly true of small employers.

Most people in California work for small employers. Therefor we need something to make employers willing and able to provide health insurance for their employees. A.B. 39 does just that. Please write to the Assembly Revenue and Tax Committee urging them to vote for the bill.

###

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issue

Urge Congress to Allow INS Recognition of Gay Families

By Boyce Hinman

Imagine that you have fallen in love and want to spend the rest of your life with a person from a foreign country. If you are a heterosexual American, your partner can gain permanent resident status—and eventually citizenship—by marrying you. But if you are gay or lesbian, you cannot sponsor your partner for citizenship because immigration laws do not recognize same-sex couples.

In fact, under no circumstances can a United States citizen use a committed relationship as a basis for sponsoring a partner of the same sex from a foreign country, no matter how long the couple has been together or how committed their relationship. "Dual passport" gay or lesbian couples must either go to another country to live together or live apart and struggle to maintain their relationships through expensive phone calls and infrequent visits. Very wealthy gays and lesbians and those with specialized job skills can petition the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for legal resident status, just like heterosexual individuals. But, unlike heterosexual couples, the most important person in the prospective immigrant's life doesn't count.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D–NY) introduced legislation in the last Congress to remedy this problem. The Nadler bill, called the "Permanent Partner Immigration Act," would add the term "permanent partner" to sections of immigration law that provide immigration rights to legally married couples. By doing so, the bill would allow gay or lesbian citizens to sponsor their partners to become U.S. residents without relying on state or federal recognition of gay marriage.

While this legislation did not receive a welcome reception in the just-ended 106th Congress, Congressman Nader has decided to try again by introducing HR 690. Appropriately, he introduced the bill on St. Valentine's Day.

Branded as "psychopaths" and "sex deviates," gay and lesbian immigrants were banned from the U.S. until

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Women's Issue

Health Care for Low-Income Women

By Adrienne Lauby

One way or another, the Women's Issue in our newsletter often centers on health. In part this is due to the huge rise in breast cancer over the last two decades. It also has to do with the attack on women's reproductive rights from religious fundamentalists and politicians. The traditional role of women as caretakers is another reason health often tops the list of women's concerns.

One element of this picture, however, is less typically considered a women's issue. This element is poverty. Women continue to be paid less than men and this disproportion is reflected in inheritance, job training, employment, and other income sources.

Racial injustice makes the picture even worse. Despite high levels of employment, nearly 60 percent of Latinas live in families with incomes below twice the poverty level, compared to 23 percent of white women.

Many uninsured men also remain outside the medical system and without adequate income or a job that provides health insurance. Both men and women cannot afford even the most basic medical exams and tests.

Studies show that 37 percent of black women, 43 percent of Hispanic women, 44 percent of white women, and 55 percent of Asian women reported no Pap smear test in the past year. This relatively cheap, painless, and noninvasive test has resulted in a 40 percent reduction in invasive cervical cancer over the past 40 years. Why are so many women unable to afford this simple life-saving test? Free yearly Pap tests for all women would save lives. They would also save millions of dollars in state health costs and millions of hours of emotional and physical pain.

Last year, the California legislature passed a bill to provide preventive health care to all uninsured women with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Governor Davis vetoed the bill, saying it should go through the budget process.

Now the bill is back with a new sponsor and bill number: AB 130 by Tony Cardenas (D–Sylmar). With the support of Lambda Letters members and other concerned people around the state, this bill should finally be enacted. ###

HIV/AIDS Issue

Keep HIV Tests Anonymous

By Marty Martinez, AIDS Project East Bay

Starting this year, the State Office of AIDS began using a new form to gather information from persons going into anonymous testing sites for an HIV test. The form breaks with older forms by asking for the first letter of the last name and the exact date of birth. The new form is called the HIV-5. AIDS advocates, led by the Berkeley Free Clinic, have begun a campaign to alert the State Office of AIDS that the form is unacceptable and possibly illegal.

HIV tests must be anonymous. The stigma attached to AIDS is such that even asking for partial information may put off individuals in high-risk groups from seeking an HIV test. Communities of color and gay men have long histories of mistrust of the medical establishment. Any barrier that discourages (even slightly) an individual from getting an HIV test will cause more HIV infections.

Under California law it appears that anonymous HIV testing sites are not allowed to ask for the information that the HIV-5 form requests. It is possible that by opening a slight door, this form will enhance the efforts of those who are calling for the full disclosure of the names of people who test positive for HIV, despite all the evidence that this would greatly exacerbate the epidemic.

Please sign and send the enclosed letter to the California Department of Health Services, which oversees the State Office of AIDS.

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March Legislative Update

We are now in the midst of the new two-year session of the California Legislature. Any legislation that did not pass and get signed by Governor Davis last year is now dead. All new bills had to be introduced by no later than February 23rd. Here is a list of the bills we have found so far (as of mid-February) that relate to our four issue areas.

HIV/AIDS Issues

AB 42 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To require that, under certain circumstances, insurers pay for routine medical care when a person is involved in clinical trials of a new medicine or other therapy.
Status: Referred to Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 37 (Jackie Speier, D–San Mateo)
Purpose: To require health care service plans and certain disability insurers to provide coverage for all health care services related to the treatment of an enrollee or insured in a clinical trial meeting specified requirements.
Status: Introduced. Assigned to Senate Insurance Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 187 (John Vasconcellos, D–Santa Clara)
Purpose: To require the State Department of Health to establish and maintain a voluntary program for the issuance of registry identification cards to qualified medical marijuana patients. This bill would establish procedures under which a patient with the card could use marijuana for medical purposes.
Status: Introduced. Not referred to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issues

AB 25 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To allow opposite-gender senior citizen couples to register as domestic partners if one of them is over 62 (currently both must be over 62). It also allows people to make medical decisions for their partners under certain circumstances; requires certain insurers to offer domestic partner coverage in their group health or disability plans; requires many employers to allow employees time off to care for a sick domestic partner; and requires that a domestic partner be given preference when conservatorship is being considered for a person. It also adds domestic partners to the statutory will form; removes the income tax liability for employer-provided domestic partner health insurance; and allows people to receive unemployment insurance, under certain circumstances, when they quit a job to follow a domestic partner. The bill does not reverse the feature of AB 26 (passed in 1999) that allows state and local governments to offer health insurance to the domestic partners of their retirees, but which terminates the insurance for the partner if the retiree dies first.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.

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Mea Culpa

Lynn Dobbs

As a great many of you have pointed out, a few of the letters lately have contained some serious editing errors. I typeset the letters written by our analysts and it seems I can't proof my own work.

As a result of much embarrassment, I have enlisted the aid of two volunteer proofreaders who have professional credientials for copy editing and proofreading.

Many people have also complained about the slowness of mail delivery. The bulk mail for zip codes from 93600 through 96099 is routed through ADC Oakland. We can't speed up the bulk mail to those zips.

We ahve decided to take a deep breath and send mail to those zip codes by first class mail.

###

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LLP Position: Support, but urge reversal of the above feature of AB 26 so that survivors of retirees can continue receiving health insurance.

AB 64 (Elaine Alquist, D–Santa Clara)
Purpose: To provide a state income tax deduction for the premiums paid by a taxpayer for long-term care insurance on the taxpayer and his or her spouse and dependents.
Status: Referred to Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee. No hearing date set yet. Author might not push the bill because of its cost in this year in which so much state money is being spent on buying electricity.
LLP Position: Support if domestic partners are added alongside spouse.

AB 79 (Sally Havice, D–Cerritos)
Purpose: To require schools to prepare plans for protecting the safety of students against bullying by their classmates (a big problem for queer youth) and plans for conflict resolution.
Status: Referred to Assembly Education Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 194 (John Longville, D–San Bernardino)
Purpose: To clarify the process to be used by California courts when certain post-operative transsexuals request legal recognition of their new sex.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support. Lambda Letters is the bill's sponsor.

SB 143 (Kevin Murray, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the Attorney General to provide grants to community-based hate violence prevention and response networks.
Status: Referred to Senate Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 144 (Kevin Murray, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the Attorney General to establish, operate, and publicize a toll-free telephone number and a Web site to allow victims and witnesses to report hate crimes and racial profiling incidences.
Status: Referred to Senate Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

People of Color Issues

AB 5 (Thomas Calderon, D–Montebello)
Purpose: To prohibit an insurer from taking into account the credit rating of an insured or potential insured for the purpose of determining the rate to be charged for an insurance policy.
Status: Introduced. Referred to Assembly Committee on Insurance.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 8 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To allow the state to make grants and loans of up to $55,000 for reconstruction of commercial and industrial buildings in certain downtown areas, as long as the buildings will provide low-cost rental housing.
Status: Heard in Assembly Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 14 (Jackie Goldberg, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the State Board of Education to develop a mechanism for approval of local school districts' requests for school construction grants that give priority to districts with severe overcrowding, that bus many students to other districts because of a lack of classroom space, or that have multi-track, year-round education programs.
Status: Assigned to Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 32 (Keith Richman, R–Chatsworth)
Purpose: This bill would create the Cal-Health Program to be administered by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board. Under the program the board would contract with health care service plans and disability insurers to provide a range of health care coverage

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Legislative Update

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options, including a standard uniform benefits package that would be available for purchase at subsidized rates by persons with limited incomes. This bill would require health care service plans and disability insurers to offer the standard uniform benefit package and also to offer a catastrophic high-deductible health care plan.
Status: Referred to Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 39 (Helen Thomson, D–Woodland)
Purpose: To allow, under certain circumstances, a tax credit to small employers who pay all or part of the cost of health insurance for their employees.
Status: Referred to Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 48 (Carl Washington, D–Paramount)
Purpose: To require the state to implement a three-year demonstration project to make grants to eligible alcohol and drug integrated treatment services networks, as defined, in certain counties.
Status: Referred to Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 51 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To make a statement regarding the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would establish a comprehensive program to identify and abate sources of lead exposure in the state' s schools to ensure that all lead hazards in all public schools in the state be identified and mitigated as quickly as possible. Most of the worst schools with lead-based paint are in poorer ethnic neighborhoods.
Status: Introduced.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 59 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To expand eligibility of children in low-income families for health insurance coverage through the Healthy Families Program. Children are eligible if they receive food stamps or participate in either the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Head Start; or the federal school lunch program. The bill requires new procedures to encourage enrollment in the Healthy Families Program.
Status: Referred to the Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 90 (Lynne Leach, R–Walnut Creek)
Purpose: To appropriate $400 million from the General Fund to the State Department of Education for allocation to school districts whose base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance is less than the prior fiscal year's statewide average base revenue limit for districts of the same size and type. (This amount was the result of a 2000 report prepared by the Legislative Analyst's Office.) This bill would probably help the poorer school districts which often are mainly minority districts.
Status: Introduced. Referred to Assembly Education Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 108 (Virginia Strom-Martin, D–Duncan Mills)
Purpose: To require the state to issue a pharmacy license to authorize the operation of a pharmacy located on the land of a recognized Indian tribe without a pharmacist licensed under California's pharmacy law, subject to certain conditions, which would include a requirement for any pharmacist employed by the pharmacy to possess a license to practice pharmacy issued by another state or territory of the United States. It is often difficult to find pharmacists willing to work on Indian reservations. Most other states recognize each others' pharmacy licenses. Only Florida and California do not. Allowing pharmacists with licenses from other states to work on Indian reservations increases the pool of candidates and increases the chance of finding someone qualified who is willing to work on a reservation.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

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Lavender Valentines

Robyn Caruso & Karen Guckert
7 years
Congratulations!

Legislative Update

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AB 114 (Carl Washington, D–Paramount)
Purpose: To provide state funds for grants to residents of cities with populations of over two million to do home repairs to bring their homes into conformance with the city's building codes.
Status: Referred to Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support

AB 127 (Marco Firebaugh, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To designate the California Police Activities League to coordinate, plan, and help implement a statewide youth enrichment sports program to combat juvenile delinquency. Would make grants available to local organizations that establish such programs.
Status: Introduced. Not referred to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 144 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To allow the exclusion of the value of a car from being considered when determining whether or not a low-income person qualifies for certain publicly funded social service programs.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 198 (Lou Correa, D–Anaheim)
Purpose: To declare legislative intent to create alternatives for Native American tribes in California to finance and develop infrastructure and public works. Many Indian reservations need considerable improvement to schools' roads and other infrastructure. Alternatives, beyond gambling casinos, are needed to finance these improvements.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

ABX1 3 (Roderick Wright, D–South Central Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the California Public Utilities Commission to take steps to increase participation in the CARE Program, an electric and gas payment assistance program for low-income people.

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Legislative Update

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Status: Referred to the Assembly Committee on Energy Costs and Availability. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

ACR 17 (George Nakano, D–Torrance)
Purpose: To declare February 19, 2001, as a Day of Remembrance in order to increase public awareness of the events surrounding the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 5 (Tom Torlakson, D–Antioch)
Purpose: To require, for FY 2001–02, that the County Superintendent of Schools, in conjunction with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, compute an equalization adjustment for each school district in the county so that no district's 2000–01 base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance is less than the 2000–01 fiscal year statewide average base revenue limit for the appropriate size and type of district. This should help poor, often-mainly minority school districts get more money to spend on educating their students. The amount of revenue provided to each school district this year is based partly on the allowable disbursements to them last year. What the bill basically says is that if using last year as a basis for determining how much money a school district gets this year means that the district would get less than average funding, then the County Superintendent of Schools should rework the formula to give that school district more money.
Status: Introduced. Assigned to Senate Education Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support

SB 21 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To make a statement regarding the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to ensure that all lead hazards in all public schools in the state be identified and mitigated as quickly as possible.
Status: Introduced.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 30 (Wesley Chesbro, D–Arcata)
Purpose: To require the State Department of Mental Health, the Department of Finance, and the office of the Legislative Analyst to form a workgroup to study various options to restructure mental health services

and funding in California; and to require the workgroup to make recommendations to the Legislature and the governor on or before January 31, 2002. People of color certainly have no more mental health problems than anyone else. However, they are among the most uninsured in the state, and whatever insurance is available often has little or no mental health coverage.
Status: Referred to the Senate Health and Human Service Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support

SB 41 (Deirdre Alpert: D–San Diego)
Purpose: To require the State Department of Education to request proposals for the development of model curricula—aligned with state content standards—on California Native American history, culture, and tribal sovereignty to be incorporated into educational materials for pupils in grades 1 to 12, inclusive; and to appropriate $100,000 from the General Fund to the department for these purpose.
Status: Approved by Senate Education Committee. Sent to Senate Appropriations Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 59 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To authorize demonstration projects to allow health care coverage for immigrants, homeless individuals, people living with HIV/AIDS, and other populations currently facing health disparities. The bill would authorize grants to health care providers and community-based clinics to organize into formalized networks that provide health care services to migrant populations as they move through the state during the year. The bill would authorize grants to establish demonstration projects that would assist health care providers in

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developing enabling programs, making the targeted groups aware of the health care programs available to them.
Status: Double referred to Senate Committee on Insurance and the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. No hearing dates set yet.
LLP Position: Support

SB 98 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Santa Monica)
Purpose: To permit certain cities and counties to contract with the State Department of Mental Health and the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, jointly, to provide specified services under the Medi-Cal program to low-income persons with a dual diagnosis of alcohol or drug addiction and mental illness.
Status: Referred to Senate Health and Human Services Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

Women's Issues

AB 4 (Patricia Bates, R–Laguna Nigel)
Purpose: To require people convicted of certain sex offenses to register with the campus chief of police and with the local chief of police or the sheriff whenever they enroll in any university, college, or community college, for the rest of their lives.
Status: Introduced. Referred to the Assembly Committee on Public Safety. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support while expressing concern about requiring lifelong registration.

AB 6 (Tony Cardenas, D–Mission Hills)
Purpose: To permit schools to establish before- and after-school enrichment programs for children, and establish maximum grants for these programs.
Status: Introduced. Referred to Assembly Education Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 130 (Tony Cardenas, D–Sylmar)
Purpose: To expand and reorganize a state-funded family planning program to make it a comprehensive preventive and health screening program for low-income women under 65. Would provide funding for family planning services, but specifically excludes funding for abortion-related services or advice. Current law already prohibits spending for abortions and this law leaves that provision unchanged.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support with reservations about the abortion issue.

AB 160 (Patricia Bates, R–Laguna Niguel)
Purpose: To specify that a restraining order or protective order has precedence over any civil court order. Would prohibit courts with jurisdiction over civil matters from issuing orders that are not in compliance with a restraining or protective order issued against a defendant in a domestic violence criminal case. Would prohibit courts with jurisdiction over domestic violence criminal cases from issuing restraining or protective orders against a defendant that allow a civil court to compromise the protections provided by the order. Would provide that restraining or protective orders issued in domestic violence criminal cases shall remain in force throughout a defendant's sentence, including incarceration, probation, and parole.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 180 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To exempt form state sales tax items sold by a thrift store in support of an agency that provides services to people with cancer.
Status: Introduced. Not assigned to a committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 66 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Santa Monica)
Purpose: Would require the court, when considering issuance of a protective order, to search specified records and data bases to determine if the proposed subject of the order has any specified prior criminal convictions or outstanding warrants, is on parole or probation, or is or was the subject of other protective or restraining orders. Would require the prosecuting attorney, in all prosecutions of certain crimes, when a conviction is obtained, to cause a search to be made of specified data bases, for review by the court, to determine if the defendant is the subject of any protective or restraining orders and to notify other courts of the pending prosecution.
Status: Referred to Senate Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

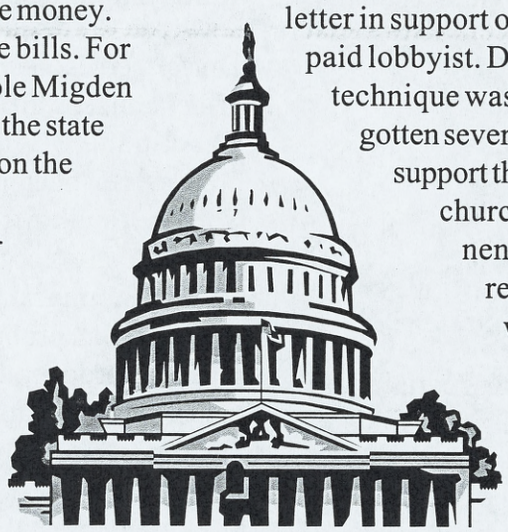
Lobbying, It's Not Just for Lobbyists

Continued from page 1

effect on the civil rights movement? Well it is very likely to do so.

Recently I called the office of Assemblymember Elaine Alquist (D–Santa Clara). She has introduced AB 64, which would allow people to take tax deductions for premiums spent on long-term care insurance for themselves, their spouses, and their dependents. I asked whether domestic partners could be added to that list. I was told Alquist might well agree. However, she might not push for passage of the bill this year. Her reason: the state is spending so much money on buying electricity that it might have to torpedo legislation for anything else that would cost the state money.

But that could affect lots of state bills. For example, AB 25, introduced by Carole Migden (D–San Francisco), would eliminate the state income tax that employees now pay on the value of employer-provided health insurance for the employee's domestic partner. Eliminating that tax would cost the state money. Should that feature of the bill be removed to increase the bill's chance of passage? Maybe so. We may need to look at all the bills we are supporting to see whether they involve costs to the state and determine whether the bill is likely to pass with the costly provision left in them.



Then there is the question of how much to put in one bill. AB 25 is a so-called omnibus bill, which means it has lots of features. AB 25 would provide a long list of benefits to domestic partners in California. Last year Governor Davis said he would sign only one "gay rights" bill. He kept his promise. The benefit of a far-reaching omnibus bill like AB 25 is that, if the governor signs only this bill, domestic partners will get *many* new rights and benefits.

On the other hand, governors cannot veto only the parts of bills that they dislike. With the exception of budget bills, they must sign or veto the whole bill. If a governor really hates one part of a bill, he is likely to veto the whole bill because of that one thing. The more you pack into a bill, the greater the chance that he will veto it because he dislikes something in it. There is no universal right or wrong strategy on this issue. You just have to take your best guess on the matter and then work like hell to make it happen.

As I said, much of lobbying is pretty simple. The most fundamental lobbying technique is for people to write to or call their legislators. Letters and telephone messages can be very simple—as simple as saying, "Please vote for AB 25." What really matters to the legislator is that a voter from his or her district has an opinion on a bill. Conservative Christian groups have used this technique very effectively for years.

Lambda Letters has been supporting the introduction of a bill to ban employment and housing discrimination against transgendered people. Recently one of our board members, Delores Dickerson, persuaded the Council of Churches of Santa Clara County to write a letter in support of the bill. Delores is not a trained or paid lobbyist. Do you know what her successful technique was? She simply asked. She has also gotten several Evangelical Christian churches to support the bill. Typically the Evangelical churches are among our fiercest opponents. So what she accomplished is a real coup. Again, her basic technique was to ask. Such a simple concept!

Last year two transgendered women gathered over 200 letters in support of a bill to ban discrimination against transgendered people. How did they do it? They made a few hundred copies of a letter of support for the bill. Then they stood outside a bar one night and asked people to sign the letters. There's that "ask" word again. These women are not trained lobbyists. They just care enough about human rights to invest some time and effort in obtaining them.

Often newspapers carry news about legislation that is important to our community. It might be about a bill to grant rights to domestic partners or to protect a woman's right to choose. That is a perfect time to write a letter to the editor expressing your views on that legislation. You don't need a college degree to write a letter to the editor. All you need to do is speak from your heart and state your views on the bill in question. Legislators closely monitor letters to the editor in the newspapers in their legislative districts. It's their way of measuring public opinion among the voters. What they read in those letters to the editor can affect how they vote on the bills before them.

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Lobbying, It's Not Just for Lobbyists

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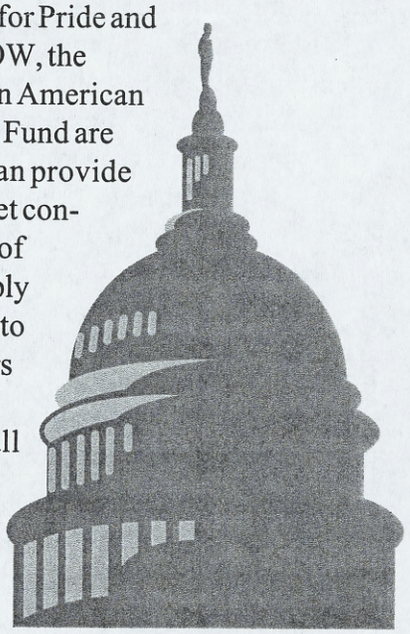
Do you have Internet access? If so, the Internet is a great way to get information about legislation. Just go to Lambda Letters' Web site, or that of any other civil rights group, and you will find a wealth of information about bills of importance to the community. The Internet is also an excellent way to spread the word about important legislation. You can use it to urge your friends to call or write their legislators or to express their opinion in letters to the editor.

Obviously there are times when expert information or advice about legislation is needed. There are several lobbying groups that can provide you with that information. For example, Lambda Letters, the California Alliance for Pride and Equality, California NOW, the ACLU, and the Mexican American Defense and Education Fund are just a few groups that can provide information. You can get contact information on any of those organizations simply by calling the Sacramento office of Lambda Letters at (916) 965-6851.



So now you have all the basic knowledge you need to be an effective lobbyist. Lobbying is really pretty simple. The real issue is how much do you care about securing your rights and the rights of all the disenfranchised in California? Do you care enough to get involved? I look forward to hearing from you.

Note: For details on the bills discussed in this article, please review the Legislative Update found on page 5.

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LGBT Issue

Continued from page 3

1990. Now some foreigners who are persecuted in their homelands simply for being gay can petition for asylum. The Nadler bill is an appropriate next step toward establishing equality in immigration standards for gay men and lesbians.

Family unification is at the heart of U.S. immigration law. Approximately 75 percent of the one million green cards and immigrant visas issued each year go to family members of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. However, the INS's current definition of family excludes same-sex partners. This bill seeks to recognize the reality that a gay couple is a family.

The U.S. lags behind other democracies in extending fair treatment in immigration policies to gay couples. Thirteen other countries currently allow the gay partners of their citizens to become permanent residents, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

But immigration law here in the U.S. is so backward that San Francisco took the dramatic step of proclaiming itself a "City of Refuge" for dual-passport gay couples. In the spring of 2000, city supervisors voted to instruct city workers *not* to alert immigration officials to partnered gay and lesbian foreigners living on expired visas. While San Francisco has taken a compassionate approach, U.S. immigration law must be changed to make such subterfuge unnecessary.

Please sign the sample letter addressed to your member of the House of Representatives and urge him or her to do everything possible to get HR 690 passed into law.

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Don't Know Who Represents You?

Send your request with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and we'll send you a complete list of your elected officials. Or go to www.lambdaletters.org to find out who represents you.

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Double Jeopardy

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

One of the bitter truths about this world is that those who are born with much are given much in life. By contrast, those who are born poor get very little in life. The dirty little secret behind all of this is that we all lose as a result of these things.

Recently the California Teachers Association (CTA) issued a report on the test scores and demographics of students from public schools across California. The CTA found that students in schools with the lowest test scores were overwhelmingly (94 percent) nonwhite, poor, and spoke a primary language other than English. Just 4.2 percent of students in the lowest-performing schools were white. Almost 71 percent of students in the higher-performing schools were white. The CTA found that the gap in scores between the poorer- and better-performing schools was consistent through every grade level and the gap is widening, not decreasing.

So do we give students in the poorer-performing schools extra help to overcome their educational problems? Not in this world. The CTA study found that the poorest-performing schools were usually larger, more crowded, more likely to be on year-round schedules, and more likely to have non-credentialed teachers.

There is an old saying that the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. Our school system is one of the reasons why that happens. We are just not equipping students in poor schools with the tools they need to succeed and pull themselves out of poverty.

That's tough on them, but it's bad for us all. Poor people need more publicly funded supportive services. Who pays for those services? We all do. Do you make your living, directly or indirectly, from selling a service or product? The more people who are poor, the fewer who can afford to buy your product or service. The more economically well-off people there are in society, the better off we all are.

Do poor people get a lower quality of health care? You bet they do. Does that mean they are more likely to get epidemic diseases? Sure they are. For example, a very drug-resistant form of tuberculosis is on the rise in our inner cities. Can diseases like that spread to the general community? Of course they can.

The saddest thing is there may be many new Albert Einsteins or Jonas Salks among the urban poor. These hidden geniuses may be the ones who could find the cure for AIDS, cancer, Alzheimer's disease. Will they find those cures? Not if they don't get the education needed to do it.

So just who is in double jeopardy? Ironically, it may be the general population. Poor inner cities, with poor education and health care, may generate virulent epidemic diseases. Sadly we may not find the cure for them because some inner city genius hasn't had the education needed to find the needed cures.

We need to do a better job at educating young people from all walks of life.

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Correction

Last month we published an article called "On Being Heard." Among other things, it told how people could find copies of state bills and lists of state legislators on the Web. The last paragraph of the article described how to find lists of members on committees in the State Assembly. The directions were right, but by mistake we said it was the way to find members on State Senate committees. So here are the correct instructions for finding lists of legislators on State Assembly committees.

Point your browser at our Web site (www.lambdaletters.org). Click on the Legislative Update button. Click the bill number of any bill on the list. Scroll to the bottom of the page that appears and click on the word Committees. Look for the word Assembly on the left side of the resulting page and click on it. When the next page appears, click on a committee name to see a list of the Assemblymembers on that committee.

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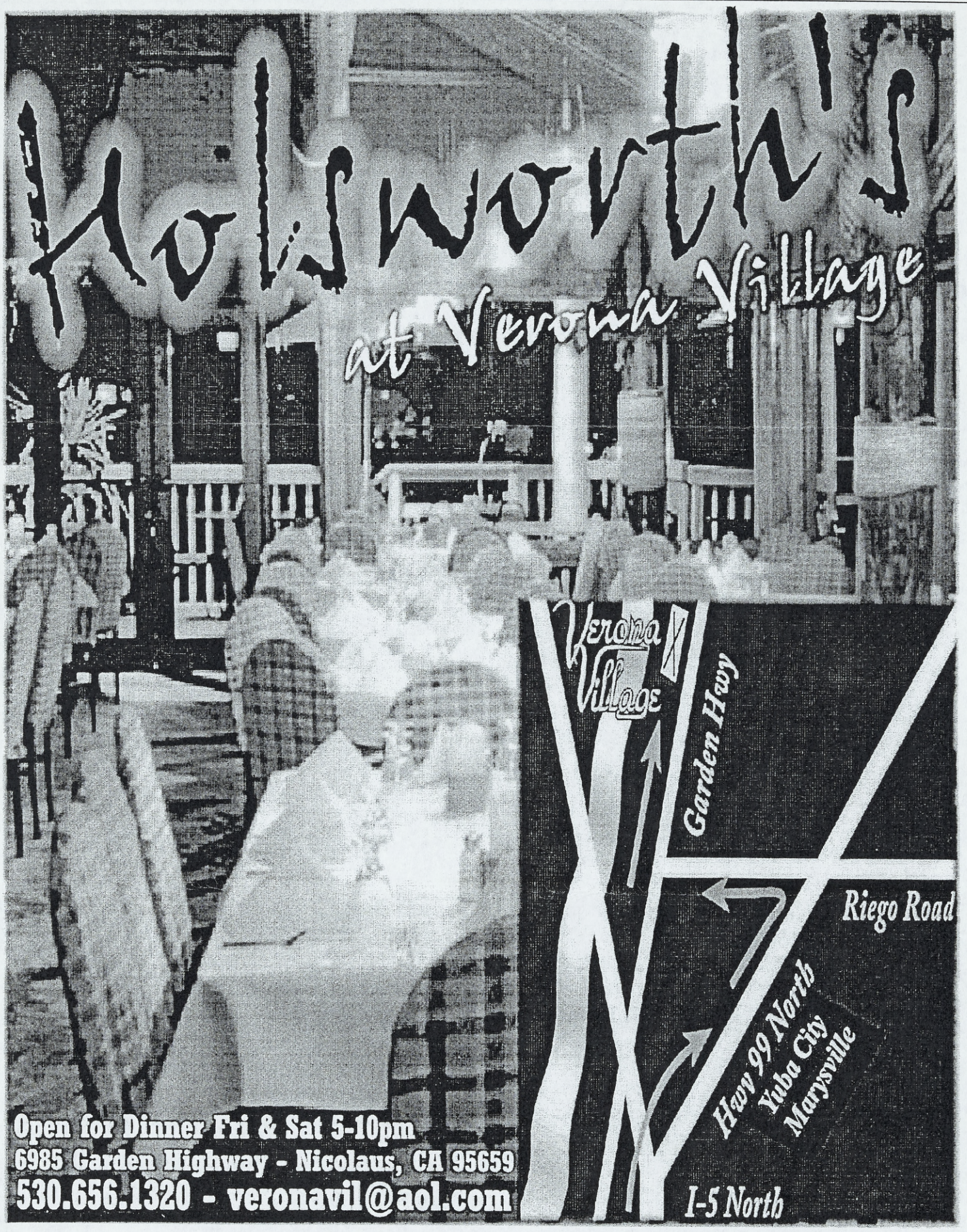
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